

via paciS

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

AUGUST 2022

VOLUME 46, NO. 1

THE NEW NORMAL

by Frank Cordaro

Will it ever be normal again? Answer: Yes. As soon as we get use to the now.

The last two years have been incredibly difficult for our world, our nation and our Catholic Worker community in Des Moines. What is the new 'normal' for the Des Moines Catholic Worker (DMCW) right now? It's changing on many levels.

On one level, this is the first issue of the *Via Pacis* that our community has put out this year after only publishing one issue last year. I hope we can get another one out before the end of 2022. Is this the new normal? I hope not. Since we started the DMCW in 1976, we've been putting out an issue four to six times a year.

Like Dorothy Day and the New York City Catholic Worker (NYC CW), we not only wanted to serve the poor in our community, we also wanted to be propagandists for the Catholic Worker's radical Aims and Means agenda. The NYC CW started their newspaper before they started housing and feeding the poor. We started our newspaper in Des Moines a couple of months after we opened in Aug 23, 1976. Also like the CW in NYC, our newspaper, *the via pacis*, has been our major fundraising source. Mailing hard copy newspapers may not be part of our future efforts, but propagandizing and begging will still be needed. Finding the new normal to do both is one of the challenges facing the DMCW in the future.

Over the last two years our community turnover has been high, even for us. Plus, to date, nine community members have had COVID 19; Eddie, Norman, Annie, Austin, Araceli, Jean, Julie, Frieda and I have all had the virus. All needed quarantining. All were vaccinated. No one needed hospitalization. Julie is dealing with some long term COVID issues that hopefully will resolve soon.

Having four houses and being one community has always been a challenge. With the pandemic it's been even harder. The very act of conspiring in community implies breathing together as one. This is also the very same behavior that spreads the virus from person to person. Even so, over time and the pandemic, each house developed its own little culture within the larger four-house community.

This is happened in a big way at the Chelsea Manning House. At the height of the pandemic in 2021, at the wisdom of the community, all of our older and more vulnerable members moved into one house together. Eddie Bloomer (75 yrs), Norman Searah (71 yrs) Annie Patton (65yrs) and me (71yrs) all moved into Manning House. This DMCW "Elder Collective" not only consists of the oldest members in our community, but all four of us have collectively logged more than 125 yrs at the DMCW! We are family too! Our "in house mission" is to care for each other, Norman being our greatest challenge. In the last

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Community members on the front porch of the Rachel Corrie house, gathered for Frieda's going-away party.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or send an email to dmccatholicworker@gmail.com.

MAILING ADDRESS

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BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-214-1030
Hospitality Hours:
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday: 3-6:30pm
(meals at 3pm and 6pm)
Saturday: 12-2pm (meal at 12pm)
Monday and Wednesday: CLOSED

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

PHIL BERRIGAN PEACE AND JUSTICE LIBRARY

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CHIAPAS PROJECT

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As for ourselves, we
must be meek, bear
injustice, malice,
and rash judgment.
We must turn the
other cheek, give
up our cloak, go a
second mile.
-Dorothy Day



“Pain Endures”

Pain endures
Are the words really yours
Or did you choose them
With the intent to use them
To strike a chord?

I was crazy for a brief period
Don’t want your sympathy
I just want you to see me clearly

The trauma continues

Our collective consciousness fractured
If I’m an irredeemable monster
Is my pain a non-factor?

A trail of tears when I walked
My histoy caught between addiction
And the friction of Life behind walls
Pain endures

by Travis John Wolfkill

“Must be crazy”

My little brother told me I was forgotten
I know he still hates me for my problems
He fears he’s more like me
Than he wants to acknowledge

I went to college
But dropped out after 9-11
Went to jail after September
I thought the world was ending

Fast forward toward a Trump era
Where everything’s political
Even the pope is cynical
I wrote the Department of Corrections
“There’s an error on your vision board”

I imagine a future without so many prisoners
Where Crispr will edit whatever makes us criminal
Or maybe the laws will change and the strong aim
To amend the wrong ways

Given life without parole
At such a small age
Yet I still have hope...
I must be crazy

by Travis John Wolfkill
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P.O. Box 316
Fort Madison, IA 52627

“Budha’s Ode to Kintsugi”

Chose
a few words

broken shards
really

repair them
with attention

and long craft

more holy
and beautiful

than before
they shattered

by Frank Pommersheim

“You with Me”

Alone
Together, but alone
Feelings of friendship
touched but not grasped
longed for, not lived
like water flowing through my grip
friends gone like a sailed ship

The longings of my heart
are barely beyond grasp
for friendships
I doubt will last
for friends
everywhere and yet nowhere

But somehow, I think it’s meant to be
like a fleet of ships lost at sea
all of us alone, only guided by the stars
hoping, come sunlight, we will not have traveled that far
For the sight I most long to see
is the face of a long-lost friend staring back at me
saying I, too, have weathered the waves
braved the sea, been lost in the night breeze
you were never alone
for whether 1,000 or 10 miles lay between
It was always you with me

by Austin Cook

“good work”

hot dish water
stings my hands
good work

hot summer yard
sun beats down
good work

painting house walls
climb the ladder
legs sore
stretch to reach
good work

number ten cans
hands full
climb the stairs
sweat down my back
good work

stirring rice
huge pot
arms sore
good work

community meetings
listening
learning
brain full
good work

smiling housemates faces
on the porch
good work

by marie nalan

A Catholic Worker Philosophy of Money

by Austin Cook

Recently, the Des Moines Catholic Worker was approached by incredibly generous and giving donors who wanted to establish an endowment for us. The plan was to invest a certain amount into an endowment, and all of the interest earned on the investments would be given to the Catholic Worker to feed the poor and keep the houses in working order. Before I get into a theology of money, I want to iterate gratitude for the generous spirits of our donors: your donations keep our houses running, us and our guests fed, and we could not operate as we do without you. Your generosity is godly and in the footsteps of Jesus, who gave to the poor.

Even as I write this, I want to redirect some of our ideals around giving, starting with my own. John Wesley, the founder of the tradition I come from, promulgated the ideal that Christians' approach to money be "gain all you can, save, all you can, give all you can." At first, this seemed like the best approach I could find, but after coming to the Catholic Worker and studying the Aims and Means, I question this approach. The Aims and Means identifies usury as "a major contributor to the wrong intrinsic to [the capitalist] system," for it allows "those in power to live off the sweat of others' brows, while those without power are robbed of a just return for their work."

Without interest - without Wall Street and other similar investments

- how does the Catholic Worker hope to continue serving food to the hungry? We wish to see small efforts such as "family farms, rural and urban land trusts, worker ownership and management of small factories, homesteading projects, food, housing and other cooperatives-- any effort in which money can once more become merely a medium of exchange, and human beings are no longer commodities." A core tenet of this system of subsistence is ecological sustainability.

Ultimately, we want to move toward this ideal. For the moment, there are people who need to be fed, and we try to feed them the best we can with what is given to us. But when asked if one should invest in the stock market, our values and core documents pull us toward a more sustainable solution, which the Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker describe as "a distributist communitarianism, self-sufficient through farming, crafting and appropriate technology; a radically new society where people will rely on the fruits of their own toil and labor." Toward these ends, we advocate manual labor, voluntary poverty, and the works of mercy. I do not want to condemn others for doing otherwise, but when asked how to support us, I want to offer these aims and means as the ways I think are most helpful in creating a just and merciful society.

Razor Wire and Fruit Trees

by Julie Brown

Military fences mark the land of Iraqi Kurdistan. To see these once sparked a deep fear in me. Thoughts of U.S. prisons and military installations. Eerie, formidable and threatening. My husband Mohammed remarked in 2016 how he hated to see these new fences as we passed them on the road. Today they are too numerous to count. I suppose I don't notice them much anymore. The newest fashion in agriculture. Stylistic leftovers from the US occupation now imprisoning delicate Kurdish fruit orchards.

The checkpoints are the same. I always wondered about the people detained along the side of the road as I passed. Most profiled for being Arab. I wondered what was happening to them. How long must they wait? Would they be safe? The Secret Security (Asaish) maintains the checkpoints. I used to be pretty scared of the checkpoint soldiers. Wearing their battle fatigues with extra clips of ammo or grenades or whatever strapped to their vests. It had been months since I really noticed them. A once fearsome part of travelling now shamefully watered down to an annoyance of turning down the radio as we pass.

I have thought a lot about the proximity and exposure to violence. How your brain does this curious thing... it alters spaces and perceived safe distances until your surroundings can become almost comfortable, if you don't look too hard. These scattered musings were all that entered my mind when trying to begin to explain how Mohammed, our dog and I ended up in the Asaish prison in Iraqi Kurdistan.

It started in late March on a scenic drive for our third wedding anniversary. We both knew enough to be out of the mountains by nightfall. That is when the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) moves around and Turkish bombings often start. The Turkish military is known to bomb civilian vehicles in their war against the PKK so we don't take this lightly. But we were hopelessly stuck axle-deep in mud on a remote mountain as the sun began to set. We knew our romantic drive was quickly becoming desperate. As night fell, we were frantically pushing, and revving, and sticking things under tires when an enormous blast echoed through the mountains. It was Turkish bombing.

With limited internet and no phone service, we contacted our hotel's owner and friend. He said because of our location and the danger from Turkey, there was nothing that could be done in the night. I was reminded of the strength of Kurdish villagers in the Nahla Valley who have learned to play cards, make bread and sooth their children while watching

fires and Turkish bombings rage on the hills near their homes. I told myself we would be ok. The bombing was on the next hill.

As we settled in for the night, we saw headlights. To our shock, it was a Mukhtar (village leader) who had been sent to rescue us. Trying to free our vehicle, he also became stuck, and a third truck took us all to his village for the night. Inside his home he offered us towels and hot water to clean the thick mud that was covering us. He then spent hours telling stories and explaining how he caught and tagged wild birds. His home was cozy and I remember feeling safe because the bombings were now 5 miles away.

The next morning the Mukhtar called a tractor to free the cars and then he kindly bid us farewell. The Asaish also summoned us to their local office for questioning. By the end of the day, we had been detained without charges. Our phones were confiscated, and we were not allowed to tell anyone where we were.

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Julie and her husband Mohammed.



David Costello, center right. A former member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, David passed away this spring.

Des Moines Catholic Worker Beg Letter: August 2022

Hello and happy 2022! We would like to express our deepest thanks to all the volunteers and donors who make the work of the DMCW possible. We humbly ask for your continued support in this special addition of the Des Moines Catholic Worker “beg letter.”

With the help of many hands our main hospitality house has remained open. We also celebrate two new additions to our live-in community, Marie and Lewis. The DMCW is alive and buzzing this summer with guests and volunteers.

Dingman House, an old Victorian on Indiana Street, is the main hospitality house and where the action at the Des Moines Catholic Worker takes place. Five days a week we share meals with anyone who passes through. This adds up to over 500 pounds of hot food per week as we share two meals on four of those days.

Meals are served through a window on the north side of Dingman house along with coffee, water, and desserts. Food and conversation are still being shared around numerous picnic tables in our shady back yard. We invite you to join us! We are hoping that COVID-19 subsides a bit more so we can fully reopen the house.

We often rely on a network of meal providers to make the second meal of the day at 6pm. We still need a few new folks who can help out in this area as we lost several groups when the pandemic started. Our guests really appreciate the extra care and variety that goes into food cooked by monthly meal providers.

On the south side of Dingman house is our “store room” window. Here folks can just ask for

whatever they need and if we have it, it’s theirs, no questions asked. If you have ever donated socks, toiletries, blankets, razors, or canned food, this is where it went. We also have a small free clothes closet out back that operates the same way. If it speaks to you, it’s yours. Huge smiles during a 3pm fashion show is a common sight around here.

We are open five days a week and are volunteer run. The community collectively has four old houses and fifteen people. We live modestly and nobody gets a stipend or paycheck but room and board is provided. Utility costs, taxes, upkeep of the houses and two vans is all done on a budget of about \$75,000.

In order to maintain the DMCW additional upkeep of the houses is ongoing and always needed. Thanks to generous donations, we were already able to repair the Berrigan basement walls that were mentioned in our beg letter last September!

Last year we updated the wiring as a big yearly project. This year we invested in air conditioning for the community. This needed addition had a big price tag and was not an easy decision or a conversation that was taken lightly. The DMCW has historically not used air conditioning unless there is a medical need. With an aging community and several members with health issues, our houses have been packed full of window units and people staying in their rooms trying escape the heat. Three houses have folks who need air conditioning for medical reasons. We didn’t feel it was right to install AC in spaces that only community members live, so the main hospitality house is also getting an air conditioning upgrade as well. We hope it will be a place for guests to cool off when we fully reopen inside. We also envision this will be an investment for the future as the summers continue to get hotter. We are hoping

that donations from our supporters will help shoulder some of the burden. Thus the reason for this mid-year beg letter.

These projects were in addition to regular operating and utility expenses since January:

- \$32,700 All 4 Houses - Air Conditioning
- \$9,272 Midwest Basement - Dingman House basement repair
- \$3,200 Coffin Electric - Freezer shed at 1317 8th St
- \$1,800 Coffin Electric - Electrical set up for Air Conditioning
- \$2,865 Handyman Mike- work done in three houses and porch repair
- \$750 - Washer / Dryer replacement at 1301 8th

Some projects that we would like to do in the future include:

- Remove silver maple tree on the south side of Dingman House (estimated cost \$8,500)
- Repair drywall holes in ceilings from past plumbing repairs in all four houses
- Fix stairs inside Berrigan house
- Repair cement near alley for better handicap accessibility to Manning house
- Kitchen update inside Dingman (main hospitality house).
- Painting

Our finances are pretty straight forward. When folks donate, we pay a bill, fix something, or put it in the pot to fund a major house repair. Nothing too fancy.

If you have construction skills to volunteer or could help fundraise for a project, please let us know. Additionally, If you, or a group you are a part of, have the ability to prepare a meal, please call _____ to find out more.

As we mark this halfway point in 2022 with love and joy, we at the Des Moines Catholic Worker ask for your continued support. Donors and volunteers have sustained our experiment in living out the Works of Mercy and are a vital part of our extended community.

We pray for a day where the world can live in peace and mutual aid, a day when we look out the window of Dingman House, and there is nobody in the food line because all have what they need and what, in justice, is theirs. Until that day of rest, we will continue to learn to use our bodies as tools of peace and justice and welcome you to join us.

David Costello: Rest in Peace

by Frank Cordaro

David Costello a former DMCW and friend, died March 4 th this year. I say former DMCW, though he was ever so briefly in the community in 2000. I asked Eddie Bloomer how long David and Mary lived with us. Eddie said “Oh, about four days.” I said, “Oh, that’s not right.” I later asked Mary and she said, “two weeks.” ... ever so briefly.

What I do remember about David’s short time at the DMCW is he got Carla and everybody else mad at him. When on storeroom duty, David took it upon himself, against the wisdom of the community, to let guests come into the store room and pick what they wanted. This lead to an empty store room and near riot in the community.

Soon after Mary and David moved out, they got a place. Mary got a job and David started working with the homeless living along the river banks in tents. Soon after that David brought ten guys from a river encampment to the DMCW for emergency housing. This was after the police forcefully cleared their encampment, but not before David got a lot of news media to cover the police’s actions. Soon after this David became a well-known advocate for the homeless within local government and social welfare networks.

This is also when David and Chuck Galeazzi started Hope Builders (Hope stands for Help Other People Everyday). Over the years David and Chuck helped meet basic needs for over 280 homeless people. They also lead the effort to get the City of Des Moines to build a new homeless shelter.

Through these years, David and I became good friends and support for each other. Our shared love and service to the poor, our Catholic Faith, love for Jesus and the Bible, our hunger for justice and shared outrage at our Catholic Church and Bishops helped cement our friendship even more.

David’s health these last couple years had forced him to stop his active public life and become home bound. It was at this time that Chuck G and I would visit David weekly on Thursdays. We talked about everything and everybody and we were loud! God Bless Mary who put up with us. Mostly, it was just the three of us while Mary was at work.

At David’s memorial service I was asked to reflect on the Gospel of Mark 9:33-37 where Jesus had to set the twelve Apostles straight about who is the greatest. Some texts are meant for some people more than others. Mark

9:33-37 is a perfect example. It’s meant for men, especially hard headed men like Dave and me. Bottom line, “Anyone wishes to be first, they shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

I asked Mary how he did this. And she said only after he started listening to her advice, “It’s not about you David.” The old adage ‘behind every good man is a better woman’ rings true here.

I told the folks at David’s memorial service that for as long as I had known David, he had lived this Gospel mandate every day, and that everyone there knew this to be true. Then I said I wanted to talk about how David died. Then I told the folks that towards the end, when the pain was constant, sometimes unbearable; David shared with Chuck and me he was having a crisis of faith of sorts. He said he started to believe it did not matter if God exist or not. Strong arguments for a God ensued.

Then I asked David, “If it doesn’t matter if God exists or not, then what does matter to you now?”

David said, “Gratitude.”

“Gratitude!” I said loudly, “That’s all you need. You can take gratitude all the way into eternity!”

On March 1, three days before he died, David called me to come over and see him. When I got to his home, he was in his living room on the sofa in unbearable pain. Mary was at work and he had a terrible night. He was fearful he would die before his daughter Kim would be able to see him again. It was hard for Dave to talk, he was in such pain.

I told David that now was the time for him to get the ‘pain meds’ that come with end of life struggles for cancer patients. I told him that if he doesn’t get the meds his family will have to watch him die in great pain. If he did get the meds, he would have to live the last hours of his life doped up and blurry but at least Mary and his kids would not have to see him die in great pain.

David got the meds, his family, including his daughter got to see him and be with him when he died.

I must confess being 71 years old myself, I know my time to die cannot be far off. I’ve looked to David for an example of how to die. I was not disappointed. Thank you David Costello, a great friend and teacher. Rest in Peace.

Stand In Awe

by Lewis Cox



Lewis and his partner, Marie Nalan, both joined the community as live-in volunteers this summer.

Hello, beloved Via Pacis readership! My name is Lewis, and I am one of the newest live-in volunteers in the Des Moines Catholic Worker community. For the last year or so, I have been a regular volunteer. The Catholic Worker has been (and I hope it will continue to be) an excellent classroom where I can be transformed by service and by recognizing our need for justice.

The more I get the opportunity to serve, the more truth I have found in the words of Father Gregory Boyle. He says, “Here is what we seek: a compassion that can stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it.” The word *awe* stands out to me the most.

Having a history in the church, I have had the opportunity to serve/volunteer with a host of organizations both in the Des Moines area and nationally. As I began my work in the Catholic Worker, the physical volunteering was simi-

lar to many other volunteer opportunities that I have done before (serving food, distributing clothing, etc.) As time passed, even though what I was doing remained relatively the same, why I was doing it began to shift.

In the Dingman house near the serving area is the image of the Messiah standing in the breadline. An opportunity to remember the sacredness of every one of the guests and volunteers I get the privilege to know. At other times in my life, I would have thought that service is about that warm fuzzy feeling you get after giving your time, talent, or treasure. I believe that service (or “acts of mercy” as the Catholic Worker often prefers) are opportunities for the divine to meet us and enter our story in a new way. In this way, the volunteers, the guests, and the live-in members can enter into a certain mutuality and kinship unheard of in most other places in our culture.

As I read more about Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, I am noticing that the emphasis of so much of the Catholic Worker Movements (agronomic, hospitality houses, round table discussions, etc.) is on what Gustavo Gutierrez calls “the preferential option for the poor.” Peter Maurin himself is recorded as saying, “We need houses of hospitality to give to the rich the opportunity to serve the poor.” In other words, service through the Catholic Worker is not just a self-sacrificial endeavor to feel good about me. Service at the Catholic Worker is an opportunity to re-imagine a world where poverty doesn’t exist. A world in which the inherent sanctity of all people is recognized. It is

to imagine a world that is not corrupted by patriarchy, classism, consumerism, addictions, or hunger (among other things). And then it is to begin living now as if that world was our current reality.

So my encouragement for you today is to stand in awe of what others around you have to carry, and perhaps in that awe, you will find an opportunity to re-imagine (with God’s help) what a world without suffering could look like. If you are a volunteer with us at the Catholic Worker, I give God thanks for that, and I invite you to think about why that is important to you and what you are learning in it. If you are not a volunteer, get connected! I can genuinely attest that my experience as an outside volunteer has been enlightening and helped me re-orient myself in the world. I hope that you will be able to find something similar.

THE NEW NORMAL, continued from page 1

issue of the V.P. I wrote “Norman is retired and in need of assisted living, which we are committed to doing ourselves at Manning House.” Since then, Norman’s health has greatly deteriorated. He’s had a significant loss of memory and mobility. We are doing the doctoring and getting help the best we can. We are getting better at working the system and are grateful for those who are helping us along the way.

In my March 2022 Phil Berrigan Beg Letter I wrote, “Did you know a ‘Bath Aid’ is code for shit management?” Though we qualify for a Bath Aid for sixteen hours a week we have not been able to find someone to do the job. God bless Eddie Bloomer who helps Norman take a shower, give him his meds and make sure he gets fed. I fill in with doing Norman’s laundry, fixing his bed and cleaning his bedroom. These are daily tasks for both of us. Ed and I also take Norman to his doctor’s appointments. Our intent is to keep Norman with us as long as we can. We are still looking for a Bath Aid for Norman. Any help would be a blessing.

In the same March 2022 Phil Berrigan Beg Letter I wrote, “Annie Patton, the silver lining in these pandemic times! Annie returned to Manning House after Ed, Norman and I moved back. She is the person at the window handing out meals for us. Everybody knows Annie. She’s from the neighborhood. She’s got a great heart and gets to use it with us.” This continues to be true. She’s the diva of our Manning House.

One more elder has joined our Collective. Rev. Bob Cook (79 yrs) officially retired and moved back into the DMCW in July. Bob was one of the first people I met in Des Moines the summer of 1976, when Jo DaVia and I started the DMCW. Bob was pastor of the Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church in town and on the same Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) board that hired me to be the first CCI organizer in Des Moines. Through the years Bob and I became best friends. Before taking his last Pastorate in Vale, IA, Bob lived with me at the Berrigan House for five years. Bob is best known for his work in El Salvador. Check out his article in this *via pacis* issue.

A new normal I am most pleased with is the communal prayer life we are maintaining at Manning House. We’ve been praying five days a week in the mornings. We read the Catholic lectionary readings for the day, pick a verse and reflect on it. Each of us then prays for someone or something. I made a point of praying and naming each person living in our four houses. Then we close with an Our Father. We do this at 7 am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and

Friday. On Saturdays we start at 9 am and end with a short bread and wine Eucharistic prayer. Austin, Lewis and Marie are regularly joining us. We have also petitioned the Bishop to lift the “DMCW NO Catholic Mass ‘Ban and Bar’” status. We are asking that he let Fr. David Polich celebrate Mass with us again.

Also, in my last Berrigan House beg I wrote “Frank’s retiring, or at least trying to!” To that end, I no longer attend the weekly community meetings. I don’t take any shifts or cook unless needed. I’m still part of the core community and in on all major decisions, I’m just not in the everyday mix of serving our guests. Though not fully retired, right now I’m just trying to stay in my lane and out of community ‘stuff’.

Also on Tuesdays, my older brother Joe volunteers at the Dingman House. Joe is a great older brother. He’s lived his life closest to following in my father’s foot steps. A coach and a teacher, his last job was a 30+ year run as Principle of St Anthony’s Grade School, our family parish’s school. After volunteering at Dingman House, Joe joins me in my room at Manning House to smoke cigars (something Joe is not allowed to do in his house), drink beer and talk about great and not so great things. One night was I complaining about spending so much time on Norman’s caretaking and not enough doing peace and justice stuff. Then Joe said, “Sonny (his nickname for me), you are doing some of the best work you’ve ever done, right now.” And of course Joe was right.

Another new normal for me is being a prison support person for Jessica Reznicek. For years I’ve been the one in our community to go to jail, ask the rest of the community to do prison support and help keep the houses open and running. Collectively I’ve done six years of jail time, never more than six months at a time. Now it’s my turn to do prison support for Jessica. In August Jess will have one year down with seven to go if we don’t get her sentence shortened.

I’ve got two things on my bucket list right now:

#1- Live long enough to see Jess free.

#2 – Make the spirit of gratitude, a lesson learned from Dave Castello be my daily mantra.



Frank Cordaro and his brother, Joe, at work in the Dingman house.



The recent Russian-led war in Ukraine and U.S. claims of Russian war crimes begs us to focus on our own 20-year criminal armed drone warfare campaigns all over the world. Therefore, we changed our banner messaging at our weekly Saturday 4p.m. vigil at the Iowa Air National Guard Drone Command Center from “24/7 War Zone” to “War Crime Site.” After five years of hosting our own armed drone command, we in Des Moines cannot escape the harsh truth that war crimes have been committed and will continue to be committed at the Iowa Air National Guard.

RAZOR WIRE AND FRUIT TREES, continued from page 3

We were transferred to a larger city with our car and our small dog. I remember looking at the facility as we approached. It was a prison. In places it had the same fences that surround the fruit orchards and was the same prison that the Badinan Prisoners had formerly been held. They are a group of political prisoners who Community Peacemaker Teams has been accompanying and advocating for their release for almost three years. The Badinan Prisoners had long since been transferred but the stories of their brutal detainment and forced confessions rung in my head and stained the air.

As a US citizen, I was bestowed the best privileges an Asaish abduction afforded. My husband, our small dog and I were given the “VIP suite” as they call it. It was what could be described as a cement cell that would hold about eight bunked prisoners in the USA. It had a carpet, two floor mats and a tiny washroom. The whole cell was illuminated by large floodlights that remained on day and night.

We were told we would only need to stay until morning. As we settled in, we found a little time to laugh. The scene was fairly ridiculous, and we were sure it would be cleared up soon. Mohammed also was sure ours was the first dog to be arrested in Kurdistan. We were told that this was standard procedures for people being suspiciously caught in “a war zone,” to which Mohammed said “This whole fucking place is a war zone!”

The next day we were informed we would need to stay two more days before we could be seen by their commander. This is when things took a bit of a turn. We knew we had been lied to and had no idea when we would be released. We calculated it would be three more days until people realized we were missing and had no idea how they would know where we were. We were far from the city we had been staying and the security have a reputation of not disclosing where people are being held. I couldn’t help but think of the Badinan prisoner, Omed Barushki, screaming in court that he had been in their prison for two years and still hadn’t spoken to his lawyer.

Mohammed and I both kind of shut down at that point. Mohammed commented on how these new prisons in Iraqi Kurdistan, such as the one we were in, were heavily influenced by the U.S. It brought a hodge-podge of images to mind from the corrupt and racist prison system in the U.S. to how the U.S. military tortured Iraqi prisoners during the occupation. It was hard to even talk that second day. Our safe space had been reduced to adjoining mats on our cell’s floor.

There was a grate at the top of the room where you could see a crack of the outside. This is

how we knew what time it was. That and meals of mostly eggs, moldy fruit and cups of sugar with a little tea added. By the second day we were just sleeping and trying to keep the dog company. I spent a lot of time thinking about my friend Jessica Reznicek. She is currently serving an eight year sentence for vandalizing the Dakota Access Pipeline. She now has a dog in jail. I found it very ironic. Something to tell her whenever I was back in the U.S. I took turns covering myself with my blanket and sharing it with our dog. I watched Mohammed sleep restlessly and thought of ways to make small talk or a blanket fort to keep the floodlights out of our eyes.

On day three there was banging on our door. A man came and told us to pack. We were going to the US Consulate. Halleluiah! We had asked nine times for them to contact the Consulate! We quickly packed and boarded a police van. We were relived and excited knowing we would be freed. Sitting on the benches next to us were two men handcuffed together. They were told they were going to their home city of Mosul and would be released that day also.

As the ride began, one of the prisoners offered Mohammed and I water. He was in his early twenties with kind eyes. He chatted a bit and offered to share space by his feet for our dog’s carrier so she wouldn’t be bounced around so much as the driver deliberately slammed through large potholes on the road. He told us he had spent five years in that prison for terrorism and detailed the brutal torture that led to his confession. I didn’t know what to say. I watched as he cycled between cradling his head in his hands in distress to sitting up straight in an attempt to shake off whatever he was experiencing.

Something about his hands stuck with me and made my head swirl. They were smaller than mine and very smooth. I couldn’t stop watching them. He then showed us burn scars made by guards. I didn’t know this person at all but couldn’t wrap my head around this boy being tortured. I also didn’t understand a five-year terrorism sentence, much like my friend Jessica’s terrorism enhancement. I think the whole world just hurls this word around. I asked him if his family knew he was coming home and he said his mother and father were waiting. Then he put his head in his hands again.

When we got inside the “US Consulate” we discovered we had again been lied to. We were in another larger Asiesh prison in the capital city. Mohammed and I were separated, and he was booked into the men’s side along with the young men who thought they were going home to be freed that day. Mohammed said he was then searched, assaulted by a guard and crammed

into an overcrowded room holding about 50 people. He didn’t even have room to sit on the floor.

Thankfully the Foreign Relations person came before I was transferred to the women’s area. Because of my passport privilege, he quickly began to clear things up. Within an hour, Mohammed was brought back. This began the process of our release over the next 24 hours. We were never charged with anything and received an “apology for the misunderstanding.” I still wonder what happened to that young man from Mosul and if he was able to meet his parents.

The whole ordeal lasted four days. As we drove the three hours from the prison to our home in Sulaimani, I seemed to fully notice the imprisoned fruit orchards and checkpoint soldiers again. I couldn’t stop thinking about our experience. The fear, the anger, the odd moments spent trying to teach our dog to crap on our cell’s bathroom floor. It has been three months and the thing that still sticks in my head is the gentle hands of the young man in the transport van.

Now back in the U.S., I find it hard to tell this story to people who have not spent time in Iraqi Kurdistan. How living wounds of occupation and war merge with global extraction and corruption to birth a system that is wholly unsustainable. This reality in Iraqi Kurdistan is a blurry canvas over which Mohammed and I continue to paint layers of our daily lives. Something that is almost comfortable if you don’t look too hard. We find safe space in our town, or home, with family and friends. Away from the Turkish bombings, TV reports of visiting world leaders and activist arrests. Then one day, like waking from a dream, you realize “this whole fucking place is a warzone.”

Civil society is strengthening year over year throughout Kurdistan as evident by recent protests and huge crack-downs on journalists and activists. As US citizens, if we are ever to begin reconciling with our current and past war crimes, we must do more to support Kurdish civil activists and journalists as they help shape a just society. We must also demand that US weapons are not being used by the Turkish Government in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Julie is a member of the DMCW and works with Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT). She spends half the year in Des Moines and half the year with her husband Mohammed in Iraqi Kurdistan. For more about CPT and Iraqi Kurdistan visit www.cpt.org

Update on Jessica Reznicek

by Belmont Pinger and Jess' support team

July 25th marked the first birthday that Jessica Reznicek will spend inside concrete walls, and it may be one of eight. In June 2021, Jess received an eight year prison sentence, a domestic terrorism enhancement, and ordered to pay \$3.2 million to Energy Transfer Partners in restitution as a result of her actions in the fall of 2016. August 11 marked one year that Jess has been locked up in the women's prison in Waseca, Minnesota.

For anyone who knows Jess, the words like "integrity," "spiritual" and "committed" usually come to mind to describe her. As she saw regulatory processes fail and civil disobedience ineffective to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline, she took matters into her own hands in efforts to protect the waters so dear to her. On election night in 2016, Jessica Reznicek and another woman disabled pipeline equipment along the Dakota Access Pipeline, through which no one was harmed. In July 2017 they publicly admitted to this, and three months later Jess' home was raided by the FBI. Two years later, a federal grand jury indicted Jess on multiple charges and she was placed on house arrest.

As Jess described in her manifesto, these actions were intentional and well thought out, and aimed to protect the waters near and dear to her heart. She and her partner turned themselves in to try to humanize the conversation around an elevation of tactics and highlight how high the stakes had become. Jess could see that this pipeline was going to be built and acted in solidarity with the rivers and the land to try to stop it. She could see the inadequacy of the regulatory bodies that later found this pipeline to be illegal. She couldn't stand aside and watch as her sacred home waters were bored under, drilled, and filled with toxic fluid. Her hunch was unfortunately right and in 2017 alone there were at least eight leaks (unrelated to her actions).

Jess being labeled a terrorist is not an isolated incident but instead a politically motivated act by the fossil fuel industry to protect their profits and continue to heat the planet. We know exactly how this terrorism enhancement came to be. In 2017, 84 Congress members (80 Republicans, four Democrats) wrote a letter to Attorney General Jeff Sessions asking if protestors who tamper with pipelines could be prosecuted as domestic terrorists. When Jess was sentenced in June 2021, this was a direct response to this letter. These 84 Congress members received a combined \$36 million in campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry throughout the course of their careers.

We know climate change is here from the wildfires, flooding, and record-breaking temperatures that constantly dominate headlines. In this rapidly warming planet, the stakes are too high to continue to let the fossil fuel industry destroy our planet, our ability to survive, and buy off our politicians. What does

it mean when the only legal way to protect the earth is to let it be destroyed? We must stand in solidarity with bold water protectors like Jess who acted outside of the sanctioned means to protect the waters- at all costs.

As ever, Jess continues to live her life with integrity and grace, even from within those walls. She has adopted a puppy and has been training it. Some COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, and so Jess and her inmates can have more freedom and spend more time outside, which is definitely welcome. She enjoys reading the mail from people as well as books.

In June, Jess' appeal was denied and the support team is now strategizing about the path forward. We encourage you to read the amicus briefs that were filed in support of the appeal. August 11 marked the one year anniversary of how long Jess has been locked up. We encourage you all to write to her, and keep her in your prayers and in your hearts.

What happens to Jess happens to all of us. Protecting the water is never terrorism.



Jessica Reznicek, who is currently imprisoned at the Federal Correctional Institution in Waseca, Minn. Photo by Christina Yurena Zerr.

For more information please visit our website at supportjessicareznicek.com and follow our Facebook and Twitter at @freejessrez. Stay tuned for an international day of action as well as bigger picture ideas of the path forward for Jess' liberation.

Learn more at <https://supportjessicareznicek.com>.



Claire, a visiting volunteer from Madison, WI, helping sort the day's donations.

A Day in the Life on Shift at Dingman House

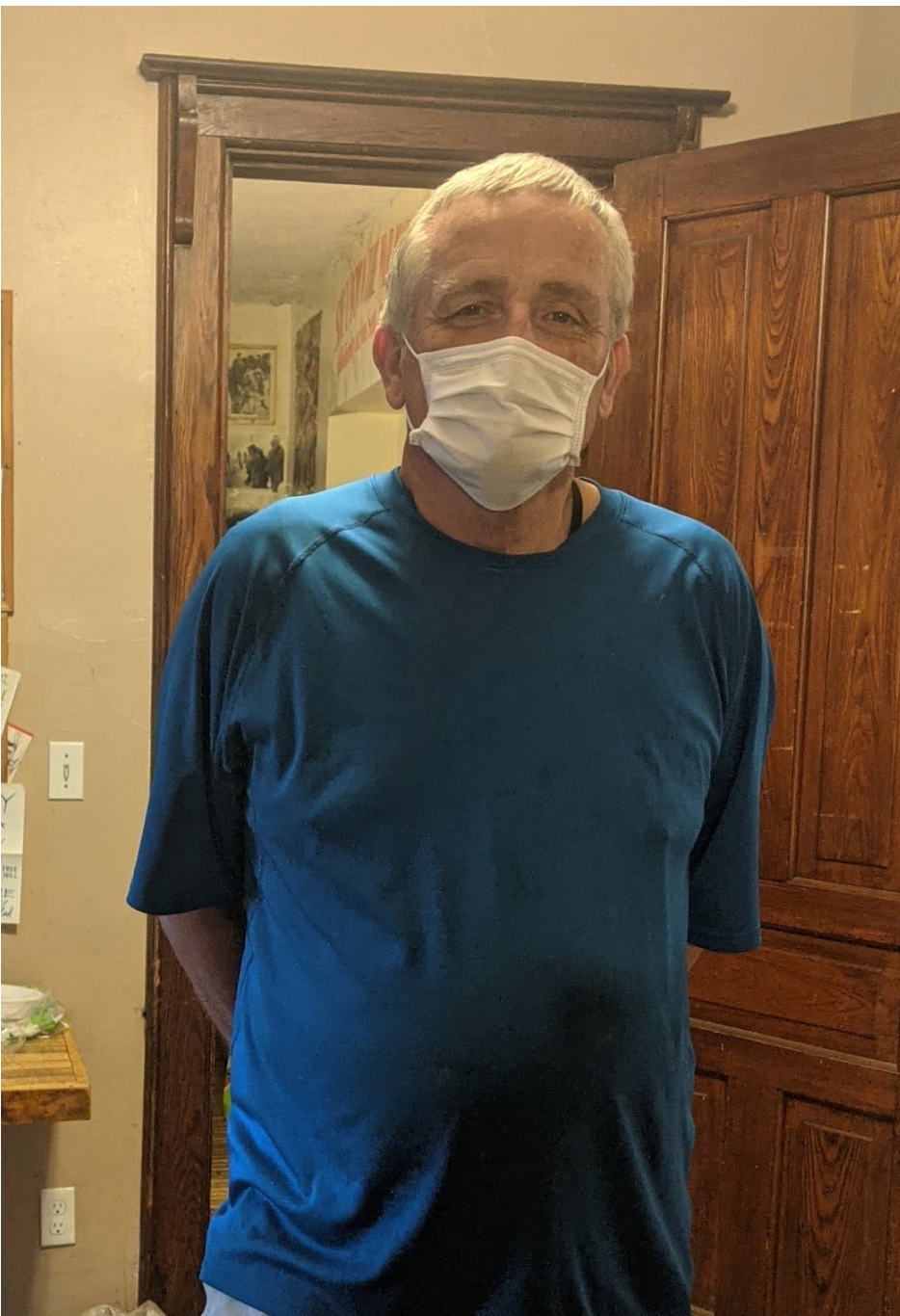
photos by Marie Nalan



Austin on dish duty.



Araceli and Annie serving at the window.



Longtime volunteer Charlie.



Austin using a slow moment to wipe down the oven.

Father Carl Kabat: Rest in Peace

by Frank Cordaro

News of Plowshares activist Father Carl Kabat's Aug 4 death reached us just as we were editing articles and laying out this *via pacis*. We went through our version of "Hold the presses!" to make room for Carl's RIP.

Fr. Carl was 88 yrs young when he died. I say 'young' because the spirit I got from talking and listening to Carl over the years, about his witness against nuclear weapons and years of prison time, was always childlike ((Mathew 18:3). For Fr. Carl, when it came to nuclear weapons, there was nothing complicated or dogmatic about what was needed. For Fr. Carl nuclear weapons were evil. They had no right to exist. And because Church and State were not taking responsibility or their disarmament, he and everyone else must do everything they can to nonviolently disarm them at our own personal risk.

Fr. Carl has the distinction of serving more prison time than any other nonviolent U.S. nuclear resister – a total of 17 years!

I first learned about Fr. Carl when his name was on the original 1980 Plowshares 8 Witness list of actors. Father Dan and Phil Berrigan were the best known of course. And I knew something of everyone else, except for who Fr. Carl Kabat was.

That all changed in November 1984, with the Pruning Hooks Plowshares witness. Fr. Carl was one of four protesters who cut through a chained fence and broke into the N5 missile silo 30 miles east of Kansas City, Missouri. Along with Carl was his older brother, Paul, Larry Cloud-Morgan (Chief White Feather), and Helen Woodson. They had entered the silo grounds and jackhammered a slab of concrete before being arrested.

The use of a jackhammer got my attention, and the Federal Government's attention as well. When asked about this at the time Fr. Carl said "To beat the sword into a plowshare, you need a hammer. Well, a jackhammer is just a little bigger hammer." For that protest, Fr. Carl received an 18-year prison sentence; he served 10. Carl would go on to do five other plowshares actions.

I took to writing Fr. Carl while he was locked up after this Pruning Hooks Plowshares witness. We put him on our *via pacis* mailing list. There must be a small

pile of post card notes from Fr. Carl in the DMCW Archive boxes in the CW Archives at Marquette University. And over the years, when he was not locked up, Carl started to attend our Midwest CW gatherings at Sugar Creek and the yearly Faith and Resistance Retreats. For a number of those years until his retirement, Fr. Carl lived with the St. Louis Catholic Worker. He was our preferred Eucharist presider at all our CW gatherings.

Though childlike, he wasn't perfect. Sometimes Carl's hard headedness, stubborn 'going my way' attitude did not serve him well. Fr. Carl was at his best for us Midwest Catholic Workers when he celebrated Mass for us. It was easy to pray with Fr Carl. Great scripture reflections, shared bread and wine duties, personal and humble. And there is that time we were at a Fr. Carl Mass and he managed to skip the whole Cannon. We all took it in stride and knew the bread and wine was Jesus.

A giant "Thank-you" to St. Louis Catholic Worker Chrissy Kirchhoefer for being one of Carl's primary support persons, being there for Carl when he needed help. Chrissy was with Carl when he died.

Here is childlike Fr. Carl in his own words explaining to a Federal Judge why he was part of a August 6, 2009 plowshares action at a Minuteman Missile silo in Colorado:

"The Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a priest, at the close of its Vatican Council II in 1965 condemned nuclear bombs as a crime against humanity and are to be condemned unreservedly. The World Council of Churches has proclaimed that 'the manufacture, deployment or use of nuclear bombs is a crime against humanity.' ... The nuclear bomb that is in the ground here is more than 20 times more powerful than the atomic bombs we dropped on the Japanese. Each of those bombs killed more than 100,000 people...The Bible says in the words of Isaiah: 'They shall beat their spears into pruning hooks and their swords into plowshares.' May the Holy One have mercy on us for not doing so."

(A play was done about this action — A Clown, a Hammer, a Bomb and God by playwright Dan Kinch.)

A letter regarding A Legacy of Light

by Bob Cook

Help bring light into the dark of night. A Legacy of Light is a 501c organization that installs solar systems on small farm family homes in eastern El Salvador in the municipality called Berlin. Since its inception in 2017, we have installed solar systems on 150 homes, which, until then, had no electricity whatsoever.

This solar electrification project was established to help hard working families, who have known only the flicker of a candle or kerosene lamp, by providing light for the family after a hard day's work of tilling the corn and beans, gathering wood for cooking, carrying water long distances from the spring or river to the home. Children who attend classes in the morning, and have family chores in the afternoon, have a race with the sun going down that they seldom win. So, the flicker of a flame is their only source of light by which to do homework.

You can read about the project in my recently published book, *Miracles In El Salvador: A Minister's Journey for Justice and Hope*. The book is available on Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble.

A U.S. based board raises the funds needed to purchase the solar systems, and then our faithful five-person team of local Salvadoran residents installs and maintains the solar systems at a fraction of the usual cost. One solar system installed including labor is 220 dollars, all donated funds. The solar panel charges a battery that provides light from three bulbs to light the home, but also has the capacity to charge telephone batteries.

I serve as director of Legacy of Light and will be traveling to El Salvador July 10 to meet with the team to discuss future goals of the project and the cost that will be required for what we decide. While there, I will also take the opportunity to visit many of the people I came to know and love when I served as missionary in the Berlin area from 2000 to 2006. I organized A Legacy of Light five years ago at the request of Fr. Candido who served as the priest in the Parish of Berlin. This privilege I have been given is an honor that will serve as the defining contribution to ministry and mission.

And now since I retired last Sunday as pastor from United Presbyterian Church in Vail, Iowa and United Church Westside, all my time and energy will go to the installation of solar electricity on all the homes of families that deserve to have light in the dark, a luxury that we have all enjoyed simply by the flip of a switch throughout our lifetime.

Please give what you can to support this project. Small or large amounts will be appreciated.

Donations can be sent to
Westside State Bank
Westside, Iowa 51467,
in care of Deb Quandt.



Fr. Carl at Sugar Creek in 2005.





Bob Cook

The X-Change

The following prose was written by Woodcraft, a artist currently in the Iowa prison system. They wish to remain anonymous.

Around 10am. Medical clinic receptionist Carol is at the desk. She’s busy. Patients are sitting about. Her cold, strict, and pitiless self has got me puzzled. We can’t she be different? It’s loss. It’s got to be loss. What else would hurt so deep? For a while she looks at what’s on the monitor. Carol’s eyes go back and forth in a rush. It must be the emails she’s reading.

Molly comes through through the doorway in a hurry. The energy changes in the room. Since Molly works at the hospital, she’s rarely here. Everybody’s eyes are on Molly. She’s got to feel the weight of them. Carol’s disposition has changed. She gets Molly’s attention, pulls her mask down, smiles, and says, “Hi.” Molly stops what she is doing, pulls her mask down, smiles, and says, “Hello Carol.” It must be women’s moral code to smile when they don’t want to. Men don’t do that.

Carol says, “I like your mask. It’scute.” What seems to be an obligation, Molly retorts the same. They both have designer masks. After reciprocating proprieties, Carol is gleaming. She wants Molly’s acceptance. Does Molly Care or is she just trying to leave?

This is important to Carol, to makean impression of kindness. Molly exits. Carol is back to her everyday self.

Wordcraft

What Good is Faith?

by Austin Cook

What good is faith? This question has many answers, but one presently sticks out for me: it helps me to see the beauty in pain and embrace the darkness. Jesus began his ministry proclaiming the good news: the kingdom of God was at hand. This is immediately followed by Jesus calling forth a community of disciples, healing the spirits and minds of those consumed by fear of destruction, and physical healing of the sick (Mark 1:14-34). Jesus announces the kingdom of God is at hand, then he shows it is here. Thus, the kingdom of God, based on Mark, consists of healing mental and physical illnesses among a community dedicated to learning and doing the same (see Mark 6:7-13). Of course, this also includes a radical redistribution of wealth (Mark 10:21) and the resultant restructuring of society. Like the man in the story, we wealthy Americans can’t really follow Jesus until we let go of our many possessions.

Faith is trusting Jesus’s message, believing the kingdom of God is here and now. Believing that physical, mental, and emotional healing is possible here and now in community. Faith is needed today because it expands our view of time and the world even when things seem to be heading toward catastrophe. It is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). It is believing that even though I give up a typical career and lifestyle, things will end well. Because of faith, God was able to step into time, become human, serve his creation, and suffer crucifixion and death in the name of love. He knew that because of it, God would highly exalt him and bestow on him the name above every name (Phil 2:6-10). Paul encourages us to have the same mindset as Jesus.

For that reason, I like how Richard Rohr briefly likens faith to night goggles in his book *The Naked Now*(120). Like pain and misery, the darkness of night can keep us contained, afraid of venturing into the world for fear of being hurt. Faith, like night goggles, helps us to see the world as it is in the midst of darkness, despair, and denial. Faith allows us to see beyond the pain and misery to the end of the story. With faith, the prophet Isaiah saw beyond the downfall of Jerusalem, depicted in poetic imagery as the felling of a forest with an ax, to a new branch that will grow out of its roots, where the rulers will render righteousness and justice in service to the poor and meek (Isa 10:33-11:4). With faith, we notice a gate where we thought was just a wall. Faith shows us the ever- present door into deeper connection with the world: love. Faith shows us what we cannot see: that being a servant, loving unto death and killed by enemies and friends, leads to the good of others, personal fulfillment, and glory to God. Faith allows us to see that pain and misery are not impenetrable walls of despair, but doors into deeper, fuller joy.



Austin saw this tree on a walk, and saw the way a new tree was growing out of the shell of the old.

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AUGUST 2022

VOLUME 46, NO. 1

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IN PERSON VOLUN-

TEERS:

Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, cleanup), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance ... without them, we burn out.

FOOD:

Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and Fish, Milk, Cheese, Salted Butter, Olive Oil, Sugar, Coffee, Creamer, Juice (sugar free), Salt, Black Pepper, Fresh Garlic, Salad dressing, Soups and Stews (both canned and fresh). Leftovers from weddings, funerals, etc.

MEAL PROVIDERS:

Provide a meal for about 70 people once a month! Call or email for current openings: 515-214-1030 dmccatholicworker@gmail.com

HEALTH AND

HYGIENE:

Menstrual Hygiene Items, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Antibiotic Ointment, Band-Aids

TOILETRIES:

Disposable Razors, Shaving Cream, Shampoo, Conditioner, Lotion, Deodorant, Soap, Travel size toothpaste, Toothbrushes, Toilet Paper

NEEDED CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats, Work Pants. (All Sizes, Especially Big) Sleeping Bags, Blankets

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Dish Soap, Trash Bags, Sandwich and Freezer Bags, Bath Towels, Playing Cards, Candles

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers—individuals or groups—with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come

in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.

\$CASH MONEY\$:

Cash donations are essential to pay our property taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance of property, upkeep and gas for two vans, purchase of needed supplies, our community gardening and for the continued publication and mailing of the *via pacis*, a good twenty percent of our annual expenses.



Austin having fun at the Rachel Corrie house.

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